2003 Annual Report NC Million Acre Initiative

Presented to the Governor and the Environmental Review Commission of the North Carolina General Assembly

October 1, 2003

By the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Office of Conservation and Community Affairs

The Latest Numbers

At the end of the fourth full year of the North Carolina Million Acre Initiative (January 1, 1999 - December 31, 2002), private and public land protection partners across the state have permanently protected an additional **228,239** "Million Acre" acres. These partners reported adding **49,554** of those acres during the 2002 calendar year. This past year's activities represent a decrease in the rate of land protection in North Carolina from the previous year.

The table at the end of this report describes in detail the number of acres protected by sector (state government, local government, etc), by program, and by time period. Footnotes at the bottom of the page note special circumstances in some of the calculations. The end result is a conservative presentation of the totals. It is likely that the numbers presented here could be adjusted upward between 10,000 to 30,000 acres. To avoid confusion in the future, only official reports of new acquisitions (from surveys, interviews, and questionnaires) make it into the final total. Estimations for non-respondents are not included.

It should be noted that, while our rate of land protection is encouraging, we have not yet reached an annual rate that will allow us to meet the goal of permanently protecting an additional million acres by December 31, 2009 (G.S. 113A-240 and 241). The primary barrier is the availability of public and private funding for new protection projects. If we intend to meet the Million Acre Goal by the end of 2009, more money for land protection must be found.

The Program

In addition to increasing the rate at which we are protecting land in North Carolina, the Million Acre Initiative continues to work towards making information about land protection tools and techniques more broadly available, and to encourage conservation planning. Because there are so many shared goals, the Million Acre Initiative has joined the One North Carolina Naturally effort, and much of the latter part of 2002 was spent facilitating the One North Carolina

Naturally regional meetings. The Million Acre Initiative, in conjunction with One North Carolina Naturally and other partners, continues to slowly, but steadily increase awareness among North Carolinians about the desperate condition of our land resources. In addition, hundreds of surveys, filled out across the State during the series of regional meetings in the Fall of 2002, make it clear that more technical assistance to local governments, non-profits, and community groups is still needed. This includes education and awareness building for local elected officials and the general population. As tens of thousands of acres a year are permanently altered from their existing natural condition for new development, increased awareness about the importance of setting aside our critical and unique lands is essential, and providing information and conservation tools is part of our job.

Looking Ahead

Calendar year 2003 looks to be a good year for new land protection projects. Final reports regarding how many acres were protected from January 2003 – December 2003 will not be available until the Spring of 2004, but estimates suggest that approximately 80,000 acres will have been protected – due in large part to the land transfer from The Nature Conservancy moving forward with state funding. Also, conversations with a number of partners indicate that land purchases that have been under negotiation for years are closing in 2003.

The upcoming year offers us an opportunity to initiate new regional-scale projects for identifying networks of important resources, and an opportunity to finalize similar projects that are already underway. By teaming with the One North Carolina Naturally effort to foster the completion of regional open space plans for every part of the State, it will be possible to see how individual greenspaces and working landscapes across North Carolina fit together into a network of essential green infrastructure. Understanding the interrelationships among those areas will help us target our protection efforts so that we maximize the cost effectiveness and the natural protection value of our investment.

Acres Under Permanent Protection

(note: a blank cell means no data were collected. 0 means no land was protected)

| | | Acres Protected | Acres Protected | Sub-Total | Acres Protected | "Million |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| State Agency | category | 1/99 - 12/00 | 1/01 - 12/01 | through 2001 | 1/02 - 12/02 | Acre" Total |
| DENR - FOREST RESOURCES | | 1,746 | 2.525 | 4 201 | 793 | 5.074 |
| DENR - FOREST RESOURCES | state forest conservation reserve | 1,740 | 2,535 | 4,281 | 793 | 5,074 |
| DENR - SOIL AND WATER | enhancement program | 349 | 526 | 875 | 535.8 | 1,411 |
| 52 66.2752 | hog farm buyout | 0.0 | | 886 | 57 | 943 |
| WILDLIFE RESOURCES | game lands | 28,010 | 15,485 | 43,495 | 6384 | 49,879 |
| WEBEN E NEGOGNOEG | game and | 20,010 | 10,400 | 40,400 | 0004 | 10,010 |
| DENR - Wetlands Restoration Program | wetlands restoration program | 139 | 75 | 214 | 379 | 593 |
| DENR - PARKS AND REC. | state park | 13,897 | 3,729 | 17,626 | 2270 | 19,896 |
| | state natural area | 315 | 42 | 357 | 9 | 366 |
| | state rec area | 0 | | | 0 | - |
| | state lakes | 0 | | | 0 | - |
| DENR - COASTAL MNGMT. | coastal reserves | 18,790 | 378 | 19,168 | 9734.8 | 28,903 |
| DEMIN GOMENNE MINORINA | public beach/access | 0 | | | 0 | 20,000 |
| | submerged lands | 0 | | | 0 | |
| DoA&CS - PLANT INDUSTRY | state nature preserve | 3,898 | | 3,898 | 3074 | 6,972 |
| DOAGOS - I EANT INDOGTICT | other lands | 5,030 | | 3,090 | 3074 | 0,572 |
| DCR - HISTORIC SITES | state historic sites | 0 | 0 | 0 | 476.94 | 477 |
| STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 470.94 | 4// |
| STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM | university property | | | | | |
| SUBTOTALS | | 07.444 | 00.050 | 00.000 | 23713.54 | 114,514 |
| SOBIOTALS | | 67,144 | 23,656 | 90,800 | 237 13.34 | 114,514 |
| | | | | | | |
| Local Governments | | | | | | |
| | parks, greenways, watersheds, | | | | | |
| CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (*) | etc. | 9,994 | 5,413 | 15,407 | 816.9 | 16,224 |
| | | | | | | |
| SUBTOTALS | | 9,994 | 5,413 | 15,407 | 816.9 | 16,224 |
| | | | | | | |
| Federal Agency | | | | | | |
| FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE | national wildlife refuge | 1,142 | 4,256 | 5,398 | 1363.34 | 6,761 |
| USDA FOREST SERVICE | national forests | 2,512 | | 4,069 | 976 | 5,045 |
| USDA-NRCS WETLAND RESERVE | Hational forests | 2,512 | 1,557 | 4,009 | 970 | 3,043 |
| PROGRAM | wetlands reserve | 3,149 | 1,894 | 5,043 | 0 | 5,043 |
| NATIONAL PARK SERVICE | national park | 209 | 6,265 | 6,474 | 201.14 | 6,675 |
| TWITTEN LETTER CERTIFIE | national paint | 200 | 0,200 | 0,474 | 201111 | 0,070 |
| SUBTOTALS | | 7,012 | 13,972 | 20,984 | 2540.48 | 23,524 |
| | | ., | , | 20,304 | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Local Land Trusts | | | | | | |
| NC LAND TRUSTS (**) | protected lands | 22,738 | 10,500 | 33,238 | 14,419 | 47,657 |
| | | | | | | |
| SUBTOTALS | | 22,738 | 10,500 | 33,238 | 14,419 | 47,657 |
| | | | | | | |
| Other Conservation | | | | | | |
| Groups | | | | | | |
| | , | | | | | |
| THE NATURE CONSERVANCY(***) | nature preserves | 4,606 | 9,883 | 14,489 | 3912.9 | |
| AUDUBON SOCIETY | nature preserves | 0 | | | 0 | |
| AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST | farmland | 0 | | | | |
| PRESERVATION NC | historic preservation | 577 | 20 | 597 | 39 | |
| NC COASTAL FEDERATION(****) | nature preserves | 2,767 | 0 | | 2168 | |
| DUCKS UNLIMITED(****) | waterfowl habitat | - | 403 | 403 | 1944 | 2,347 |
| | | | | | | |
| SUBTOTALS | | 7,950 | 10,306 | 18,256 | 8063.9 | 26,320 |
| | | | | | | |
| TOTALS | | 114,838 | 63,847 | 178,685 | 49,554 | 228,239 |
| | l | | | l | | |

^{*}Local governments include LWCF projects closed, PARTF projects funded, and counties that responded to information requests.

^{**25} local land trusts that regularly partner with the Conservation Trust for North Carolina

^{***}The Nature Conservancy closed on 45,591.42 total acres in 2002. However, counting these acres for 2002 would be double-counting, as TNC is holding this acreage (e.g. Angola Bay, Hickorynut Gorge) until it can be transferred to state ownership. Transfer began in 2003 with easement at Bear Garden.

^{****}NC Coastal Federation and Ducks Unlimited had not been counted prior to 2002. Previous numbers have been added to correct the table.